

That which is claimed is:

1. A method for matching a passenger with a driver for a trip to a destination, comprising:

5 automatically identifying a candidate driver for the trip based on a current location for the candidate driver responsive to a request from the passenger; and providing the passenger an identification of the identified candidate driver.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein identifying a candidate driver comprises

10 receiving the request, wherein the request specifies the destination;
determining a start location of the passenger;
determining current locations of a plurality of drivers;
identifying at least one of the plurality of drivers as a candidate driver based on the determined start location of the passenger and the current locations of the
15 plurality of drivers; and

wherein providing the passenger an identification comprises establishing a communication connection between the passenger and a candidate driver.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein the method further comprises
20 registering the plurality of drivers and wherein determining a current location of a plurality of drivers comprises obtaining a last known location of the plurality of drivers from a location service.

4. The method of Claim 3 wherein registering the plurality of drivers
25 comprises receiving registration requests from the plurality of drivers that identify the drivers and specify an availability as a driver.

5. The method of Claim 4 wherein obtaining a last known location of the plurality of drivers comprises obtaining a last known location for selected ones of the
30 plurality of drivers based on the request and/or the specified availability of the plurality of drivers.

6. The method of Claim 4 wherein the location service determines the last known location for the plurality of drivers based on satellite positioning system information received from the plurality of drivers.

5 7. The method of Claim 6 wherein the satellite positioning system information comprises Global Positioning System (GPS) information received from GPS receivers associated with the plurality of drivers.

8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the GPS information is transmitted to
10 the location service over a wireless connection.

9. The method of Claim 8 wherein obtaining a last known location from a location service comprises:

transmitting a request for the last known location to a location server
15 associated with the location service over a communication network; and
receiving the last known location from the location server over the communication network.

10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the location server is configured to
20 track the last known location of a plurality of wireless terminals configured to receive GPS information and wherein ones of the drivers are associated with respective ones of the wireless terminals.

11. The method of Claim 6 wherein the method further comprises
25 receiving a matching service registration request from the passenger that specifies the start location and wherein determining the start location of the passenger comprises retrieving the start location from the matching service registration request.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein the matching service registration
30 request specifies a destination associated with the user and a time for the trip and wherein receiving a request specifying the destination comprises initiating the request based on the time for the trip.

13. The method of Claim 6 further comprising receiving a matching service registration request from the passenger that identifies the passenger and wherein receiving a request comprises receiving a request from the passenger that specifies the start location of the passenger for the request and wherein determining a start location of the passenger comprises retrieving the start location from the request.

14. The method of Claim 6 wherein establishing a communication connection comprises establishing a voice connection and/or a text messaging connection between the passenger and a candidate driver to negotiate a payment for the trip.

15. The method of Claim 14 further comprising transferring the payment from an account of the passenger to an account of a candidate driver servicing the trip.

16. The method of Claim 6 wherein the received registration requests from the plurality of drivers specify an associated destination and/or availability data for the plurality of drivers and wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers as a candidate driver based on the associated destination and/or availability data of the identified at least one of the drivers.

17. The method of Claim 16 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers having a current location and associated destination corresponding to the start location and destination of the passenger and having availability data indicating current availability as a driver as a candidate driver.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises:

identifying a first candidate driver; and
identifying an alternate candidate driver if the first candidate driver is not accepted by the passenger.

19. The method of Claim 18 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying a plurality of candidate drivers and wherein establishing a

communication connection comprises establishing a communication connection with a first one of the plurality of candidate drivers designated by the passenger and establishing a communication connection with another of the plurality of candidate drivers designated by the passenger if the first one of the plurality of candidate drivers is not accepted by the passenger.

20. The method of Claim 18 further comprising registering a subscriber as both a passenger and a driver.

21. The method of Claim 16 further comprising obtaining current traffic information from a traffic database and wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers based on the obtained current traffic information.

22. The method of Claim 21 further comprising determining a distance to the destination and estimating an arrival time at the destination based on the determined distance and the current traffic information.

23. The method of Claim 2 wherein the method further comprises receiving registration requests from the plurality of drivers that identify the drivers and specify an availability as a driver and wherein determining a current location of a plurality of drivers comprises requesting location information from selected ones of the plurality of drivers based on the specified availability, the start location and/or the destination location.

24. The method of Claim 23 wherein requesting location information comprises requesting satellite positioning system information from the selected ones of the plurality of drivers.

25. The method of Claim 2 wherein the method further comprises receiving a matching service registration request from the passenger that specifies the start location and wherein determining the start location of the passenger comprises retrieving the start location from the matching service registration request.

26. The method of Claim 2 further comprising receiving a matching service registration request from the passenger that identifies the passenger and wherein receiving a request comprises receiving a request from the passenger that specifies the start location of the passenger for the request and wherein determining a start location of the passenger comprises retrieving the start location from the request.

27. The method of Claim 2 wherein establishing a communication connection comprises establishing a voice connection and/or a text messaging connection between the passenger and the candidate driver to negotiate a payment for the trip.

28. The method of Claim 27 further comprising transferring the payment from an account of the passenger to an account of the candidate driver.

29. The method of Claim 2 wherein the received registration requests from the plurality of drivers specify an associated destination and/or availability data for the plurality of drivers and wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers as a candidate driver based on the associated destination and/or availability data of the identified at least one of the drivers.

30. The method of Claim 29 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers having a current location and associated destination corresponding to the start location and destination of the passenger and having availability data indicating current availability as a driver as a candidate driver.

31. The method of Claim 2 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises:

identifying a first candidate driver; and
identifying an alternate candidate driver if the first candidate driver is not accepted by the passenger.

32. The method of Claim 2 wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying a plurality of candidate drivers and wherein establishing a

communication connection comprises establishing a communication connection with a first one of the plurality of candidate drivers designated by the passenger and establishing a communication connection with another of the plurality of candidate drivers designated by the passenger if the first one of the plurality of candidate drivers is not accepted by the passenger.

33. The method of Claim 2 further comprising obtaining current traffic information from a traffic database and wherein identifying at least one of the drivers comprises identifying at least one of the drivers based on the obtained current traffic information.

34. A system for matching a passenger with a driver for a trip to a destination, comprising:
a ride matching server configured to identify a candidate driver for the trip based on a current location for the candidate driver;
a location information interface configured to receive current location information associated with the candidate driver; and
a communication network interface configured to receive a request for a driver for a trip from the passenger and to provide the passenger an identification of the candidate driver.

35. The system of Claim 34 wherein the ride matching server is further configured to identify a candidate driver based on a start location of the passenger.

36. The system of Claim 35 wherein the ride matching server is further configured to identify a candidate driver based on an associated destination of the driver and/or availability information for the driver.

37. The system of Claim 36 wherein the ride matching server further comprises a database of subscribed users identified as passengers and/or drivers and wherein the database includes availability information and/or associated destinations for drivers.

38. The system of Claim 37 wherein the current location information comprises last known location information from a location server operatively coupled to the location information interface.

5 39. The system of Claim 38 further comprising the location server.

40. The system of Claim 38 wherein the location information interface comprises an internet protocol interface to a digital communication network.

10 41. The system of Claim 37 wherein the communication network interface includes a wireless communication network interface configured to communicate with wireless terminals associated with subscribed users.

15 42. The system of Claim 41 wherein the communication network interface further includes an internet protocol interface to a digital communication network and/or a public switched telephone network (PSTN) interface.

20 43. The system of Claim 37 wherein the ride matching server is further configured to transfer a payment from a passenger account to a driver account based on a specified payment for a trip.

44. A system for matching a passenger with a driver for a trip to a destination, comprising:
means for identifying a candidate driver for the trip based on a current location
25 for the candidate driver responsive to a request from the passenger; and
means for providing the passenger an identification of the identified candidate driver.

30 45. The system of Claim 44 wherein the means for identifying a candidate driver comprises:
means for receiving the request, wherein the request specifies the destination;
means for determining a start location of the passenger;
means for determining current locations of a plurality of drivers;

means for identifying at least one of the plurality of drivers as a candidate driver based on the determined start location of the user and the current locations of the plurality of drivers; and

wherein the means for providing the passenger an identification comprises
5 means for establishing a communication connection between the passenger and a candidate driver.

46. The system of Claim 45 further comprising means for transferring a payment from a passenger account to a driver account based on a specified payment
10 for a trip.

47. The system of Claim 45 further comprising means for obtaining current traffic information from a traffic database and wherein the means for identifying at least one of the drivers comprises means for identifying at least one of
15 the drivers based on the obtained current traffic information.

48. The system of Claim 45 further comprising means for receiving registration requests from the plurality of drivers that identify the drivers and specify an availability as a driver and wherein the means for determining a current location of a plurality of drivers comprises means for requesting location information for selected
20 ones of the plurality of drivers based on the specified availability, the start location and/or the destination location.

49. A computer program product for matching a passenger with a driver
25 for a trip to a destination, the computer program product comprising:

a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable program code embodied in said medium, said computer-readable program code comprising:

computer-readable program code that identifies a candidate driver for the trip based on a current location for the candidate driver responsive to a request from the
30 passenger; and

computer-readable program code provides the passenger an identification of the identified candidate driver.

50. The computer program product of Claim 49 wherein the computer-readable program code that identifies a candidate driver comprises:

computer-readable program code that receives the request, wherein the request specifies the destination;

5 computer-readable program code that determines a start location of the passenger;

computer-readable program code that determines current locations of a plurality of drivers;

10 computer-readable program code that identifies at least one of the plurality of drivers as a candidate driver based on the determined start location of the user and the current locations of the plurality of drivers; and

wherein the computer-readable program code that provides the passenger an identification comprises computer-readable program code that establishes a communication connection between the passenger and a candidate driver.

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51. The computer program product of Claim 50 further comprising computer-readable program code that transfers a payment from a passenger account to a driver account based on a specified payment for a trip.

20 52. The computer program product of Claim 50 further comprising computer-readable program code that obtains current traffic information from a traffic database and wherein the computer-readable program code that identifies at least one of the drivers comprises computer-readable program code that identifies at least one of the drivers based on the obtained current traffic information.

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53. The computer program product of Claim 50 further comprising computer-readable program code that receives registration requests from the plurality of drivers that identify the drivers and specify an availability as a driver and wherein the computer-readable program code that determines a current location of a plurality of drivers comprises computer-readable program code that requests location information for selected ones of the plurality of drivers based on the specified availability, the start location and/or the destination location.

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